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A method for operating an internal combustion engine having an exhaust gas purification system. Intake air throttling is carried out in order to raise an exhaust gas temperature in a low-load mode and in a traction mode. The amount of intake air throttling is determined as function of an expected load demand so that, with an expected unchanged or decreasing load demand, an increased or maximum possible intake air throttling is set. With an expected rising load demand, however, no or reduced intake air throttling is set, and the expected load demand is estimated based on operating and ambient parameters of the internal combustion engine.